

2002-2012: TEN YEARS OF SERVICE



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Lunch with the Mayor

In week two of the program, the Fellows met Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, who forwent a typical, formal address for an intimate, open discussion of the future of Baltimore. Polished, yet unassuming, the Mayor revealed her vision for the city with references to everything from Portlandia to property taxes.

The conversation centered on the Mayor's 10,000 families initiative, an effort to reverse the city's historic population decline within the next 10 years. Viewing the Fellows as both employees and constituents, she inquired on how to retain and grow the city's young professional class. As the Fellows suggested increased transit, stronger schools, and community engagement, the Mayor proved confident in her record, matching each of the Fellows requests with an impressive list of corresponding policy initiatives.

Her commitment to young families resonated with the Fellows. "I liked the Mayor's strategy to reintroduce Baltimore to America. The city has a wealth of great selling points that can be leveraged to attract and keep families" comments Carl LoFaro, Fellow with Baltimore City Public Schools.

Department of Transportation Fellow Kimiya Aghevli agreed. "Her interest in our individual experiences and observations demonstrated



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Mayoral Fellow Profiles

Krystle Okafor has a passion for public service. As a Prince George's County, MD, native, the Washington Metropolitan Area has motivated her work. "During college, I spent a summer on the Anacostia River, working as a team leader in a green jobs program for low-income D.C. youth," she shares. "Witnessing the disparities between the poverty and pollution along the Anacostia River and the affluence and breathtaking vistas that surround the Potomac River, I realized that environmental degradation often accompanies economic and social decline."

Since then, she has been inspired by efforts that link environmental sustainability with community development, holding positions at organizations like the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, and the National Complete Streets Coalition.

This summer, Krystle is working in the Department of General Services completing a study on the benefits of centralized facilities management for the city. According to Krystle, "the project is an excellent opportunity for me to hone my policy writing and research skills, and to learn about another side of city government." Also, as a budding urbanist, she is excited to see what Charm City has to offer.

A recent graduate of the University of Maryland – College Park, she plans to pursue a master's degree in urban planning, and later, a PhD in geography.



Krystle Okafor



Adam Jackson

A Baltimore native hailing from the West Baltimore Forest Park neighborhood, Adam Jackson is no stranger to success. From his time at Digital Harbor High School, Adam was highly recognized on the debate team. He debated in the Baltimore Urban Debate League and was one of the most highly ranked debaters in the city. Because of his ability, he was selected to represent the United States in the IDEA Karl Popper Debate Tournament in Predeal, Romania. Adam ultimately received a scholarship to debate for Towson University, where his team was ranked in the Top 20 nationwide.

Adam is also extremely committed to working in the Baltimore community. At Towson, Adam was the President of The Brotherhood, a campus organization aimed at raising awareness for social and political issues, while engaging in community service projects around Baltimore city that dealt with social and economic inequality. In addition, for the past 2 years, Adam has been the Vice President of Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, a youth-led community think-tank that seeks to train young people on public policy and transform the social institutions in their communities.

Adam continues to serve the community's youth through education. While performing his fellowship duties at the Department of Parks and Recreation, Adam is a debate team teacher at Lakeland Elementary and Middle School. The debate team at Lakeland ranked in the top 5 this past year. Baltimore is lucky to have such a bright and dedicated actor in the community!

Mayoral Fellow Profiles Continued

“Everyone has a stake in the health of the community. I truly believe that we are all connected. We all cannot succeed if people are suffering and if people do not look out for each other,” says Mayoral Fellow Christina Kane. Stationed in the Baltimore Housing Division of Green, Healthy, and Sustainable Homes (DGHS), Christina is doing her part to foster strong communities in the City of Baltimore.

This summer, Christina is charged with developing tactics to better the city’s lead abatement program. Her work will help streamline service delivery, coordinating lead abatement with two other DGHS initiatives, their energy efficiency and comprehensive case management programs.

Christina’s commitment to public service began abroad in the Czech Republic. While working as an English instructor, she became inspired by the entrenched multiculturalism and tradition of regional planning.

A native of Maryland, Christina will now channel her energy into creating change in her home state, building upon her community development work with DGHS. In the fall, Christina will join a local development firm that specializes in urban revitalization. She will also resume her post as vice president of the University of Baltimore’s Real Estate Law Association.

“My goals are really for communities in Maryland and the region to develop responsibly and intelligently... To provide alternative transportation and housing options, so people can have affordable options that are safe and equal in quality and price,” she insists.



Christina Kane

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a clear commitment to reach out to young professionals making the decision about where to settle and start a career,” she says.

With the remaining time, the group conversed on a myriad of topics. Responding to comments on disenfranchised communities, the city’s anchor institutions, and even her critics, Mayor Rawlings-Blake was unceasingly proud of her administration’s work, while also acknowledging the complexities of leading a major urban center. One of her biggest challenges, she claimed, was “reintroducing Baltimore.”

“We must tell the true story of our city,” Mayor Rawlings-Blake asserted, bringing this honest conversation to a fitting close.



Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake leads a lively discussion.

Amy Constanzo



Principle Analyst
Bureau of Budget &
Management Research

Academic Background:

Bachelor of Arts:
University of Maryland
Government and Politics
Criminal Justice/criminology
(2004)

Masters:
Negotiation and Conflict
Management from University
of Baltimore (2008)

Public Policy:
Georgetown University
(currently pursuing)

Juris Doctor:
University of Baltimore
(2008)

Where are you from?

Rockville, MD

What year were you in the fellowship?

Summer of 2006

What agency did you work in?

Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Constituent Services

What was the most memorable part of the fellowship?

I really enjoyed working on International Festival – it was so great to work on an event that brought so many people together in a positive spirit and it was a ton of fun planning for it. I also enjoyed the weekly Safe Zones that the department conducted in coordination with the police department. We really got to go out and meet the citizens, hear their concerns, and interact with them on a face-to-face level.

How has the fellowship affected your current career path?

The fellowship helped guide me towards a path of public policy. I realized from working as a mayoral fellow that I was more interested in helping inform the policies by which people lived rather than being an active attorney. I feel I am able to help more people on a larger scale now and that the work I am doing truly represents my agency and the city well. I feel good about the positive changes we are enacting and am excited to see the results. Helping people through policy work is a lesson that the fellowship taught me.

What is one recommendation you would give future fellows?

Keep an open mind – you never know what new adventures and challenges you'll be given! Approach each one with a "can do" attitude.

“ Helping people through policy work is a lesson that the fellowship taught me. ”

City Hall Tour and Agency Spotlight



Deemed “A Great Place to Grow” by Mayor Rawlings-Blake in her 2011 inaugural address, Baltimore is undoubtedly a city on the rise. Yet, Baltimore also has deep roots in the past. Nowhere in the city exemplifies this better than City Hall, where innovative policy is crafted in an edifice of striking, Neo-Baroque architecture. Under the auspices of City Hall curator Jeanne Davis, the Mayoral Fellows toured the building, taking a closer look at how tradition and innovation coalesce at 100 Holliday Street.

Well-versed in both architecture and politics, Davis shared how each room aided the city’s procedural needs. The resplendent Ceremonial Room is reserved for hosting special guests. The space, is outfitted with many of the original fixtures from its 1875 construction. The tour also included the Council Chambers, where city council members debate pressing issues at antique desks, and the Board of Estimates Meeting Room, a room flanked by both oil paintings of Baltimore’s previous mayors and high-tech cameras that broadcast meetings to citizens across Baltimore.

There is a particular image that can be found throughout the City Hall tour. The Battle Monument, commemorating the War of 1812, is ubiquitous at the seat of government. Depicted in mediums ranging from stained glass to marble, the Battle Monument honors Baltimoreans that died during Britain’s last attempt to reclaim its American territories. Davis began and ended the tour with the iteration of this famed image on the first floor of City Hall, leaving the Fellows with a lasting impression of both Baltimore’s historic significance to the nation and the important work that City Hall staffers do to this day.

Department of Housing

Baltimore’s Department of Housing faces a plethora of environmental challenges while building towards a sustainable future. The Division of Green, Healthy and Sustainable Homes (DGHS) uses a holistic approach to promote health and sustainability within Baltimore city homes. Led by Ken Strong, DGHS assists Baltimore families in becoming greener, healthier, and more sustainable in their homes through three basic services: energy efficiency, rehabilitation, and lead abatement. Spearheaded by a former Mayoral Fellow, The Light Innovation for a Green and Healthy Tomorrow (LIGHT) program works to integrate these services and help Baltimore residents find the appropriate services and companies for their homes.

Energy Efficiency, also known as Weatherization, provides households with low-income energy audits, safety testing and repair of heating equipment as well as installation of many conservation measures to increase efficiency. The goal of the program is to help reduce utility bills and energy consumption.

Rehabilitation Services helps low-to-moderate income homeowners make emergency repairs by offering below-market loans. These loans help finance projects to correct code violations, repair roofs for senior citizens, and build additions to make homes handicap accessible or safe.

The Lead Abatement Program helps low-to-moderate income houses with children under six years old obtain a grant or loan in order to remove or reduce the hazards of lead poisoning caused by chipping, cracking, or peeling lead paint.

The LIGHT team works by reaching out to the community to provide help in navigating the vast amount of programs that might be available to a household, whether government or non-profit funded. Outreach coordinators either help applicants apply, or refer them to the appropriate division. The team is always working on ways to make all three services operate like a one-stop shop for making Baltimore’s homes green, healthy, and sustainable.

Overview of City Government



Mayoral Fellows listen to Chief of Staff Alexander Sanchez speak.

Seated in Mayor Rawlings-Blake's Executive Conference Room, the 2012 Mayoral Fellows had the privilege of sharing a meal with top leaders in city government. The speakers included Alexander Sanchez, the Mayor's Chief of Staff; Kym Nelson, Deputy Chief of Staff; Kaliope Parthemos, Deputy Chief of Economic and Neighborhood Development; Barbara Zektick, Assistant Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Operations; and Kimberly Washington, Deputy Chief of Government and Community Affairs. The first event in the summer-long speaker series, the luncheon provided an inspiring, informative base for the months to come.

The discussion was wide ranging. The speakers were open to questions on everything from the minutiae of policy initiatives to their own career trajectories. They provided the Fellows with a breadth of advice. Utterly generous with their time, the senior team now maintains an open door policy, welcoming the fellows to continue the conversation at a later date.

The most resounding theme of the session was the importance of public service. Baltimore could not survive, Chief of Staff Sanchez asserted, without dedicated city employees to provide clean water, safe streets, and other amenities. Challenging the Fellows to be skilled, passionate professionals, he insisted this was responsibility not to be taken lightly.

"It took me 20 years to get to this room," Sanchez intoned, reminding the cohort to take advantage of this fast track to the seat of government. With words of encouragement from the city's chief executives, the Fellows began their summer, and perhaps even their careers, of public service.



Upcoming Events:

July 10th
Speaker Series:
Criminal Justice in
Baltimore

July 13th
Baltimore Orioles
vs. Detroit Tigers

July 16th
Optional Visit to
Citiwatch

July 18th
Bicycle Master
Plan



Deputy Chief Kimberly Washington talks about her career trajectory.

Credits

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